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**David Y. Ige**  
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Testimony of  
**Ronald Williams**  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Hawai'i Tourism Authority  
on  
**H.C.R 59/H.R. 29**  
**Urging the Hawaii Tourism Authority to Coordinate with the**  
**Hospitality Industry to Create a More Welcoming**  
**Environment for Chinese Visitors**

House Committee on Tourism  
House Committee on Veterans, Military, & International Affairs & Culture and the Arts  
Wednesday, March 11, 2015  
10:30 a.m.  
Conference Room 312

The Hawaii Tourism Authority supports H.C.R. 59 and H.R. 29, which urges the Hawaii Tourism Authority to coordinate with trade organizations and others in the hospitality industry to create a more welcoming environment for Chinese visitors.

Aware of the federal initiatives under the Travel Promotion Act to expand visa and travel opportunities for international visitors, HTA has endeavored to coordinate the efforts of the Hawaii travel industry to create a friendlier environment for Japanese, Korean, as well as Chinese visitors.

These efforts, however, require more than hiring Chinese-speaking, Japanese-speaking, or Korean-speaking staff, or providing training in those cultures. An important component in facilitating the goal of increasing the number of international visitors, including Chinese visitors, is access to bilingual employees with the communications skills to read, write, and speak at an honorific level. The industry needs employees who are fluent in the languages of international visitors, who understand and respect the values and mores in their countries of origin. The facilitation of this goal will require amendment of certain visa laws.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa, which allows a U.S. company to employ a foreign individual for up to six years. It is designed to be used to employ staff in "specialty occupations," which require a high degree of specialized knowledge. The law has to be amended to change the description of "specialty occupation" under the H-1B visa, to define the qualifications of an employee with the language skills required for working with international visitors. The law has to be amended to describe how a

person qualifies as having the “high degree of specialized knowledge” to read, write, and speak at an honorific level to international visitors, with an understanding and respect required in their countries of origin.

H.C.R. 59/H.R. 29 should be amended to request an amendment to the visa laws to describe personnel with the language skills required for working with international visitors as qualifying to be a “specialty occupation.”

For these reasons, we support H.C.R. 59/H.R. 29, and urge their adoption.

Mahalo for the opportunity to offer these comments.

## **COMMITTEE ON TOURISM**

Rep. Tom Brower, Chair  
Rep. Takashi Ohno, Vice Chair  
Friday, March 13, 2015  
Room 312

## **COMMITTEE ON VETERANS, MILITARY, & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. & CULTURE AND THE ARTS**

Rep. Ken Ito, Chair  
Rep. James Kunane Tokioka, Vice Chair  
Friday, March 13, 2015  
Room 312

### **STRONG SUPPORT FOR HR29 & HCR59 - URGING THE HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY TO COORDINATE WITH THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY TO CREATE A MORE WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT FOR CHINESE VISITORS.**

Aloha Chairs Brower and Ito, Vice Chairs Ohno and Tokioka, and Members of the Committee.

My name is Robert Roscoe, and I am currently a student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, pursuing a second Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and holding a Bachelor's Degree in Asian Studies acquired from the same university, with studies focused on East Asia, particularly with the People's Republic of China and Japan.

A majority of studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa with respect to the People's Republic of China focuses on the history of the relatively young nation with respect to its official establishment on October 1, 1949. With its founding, the people of the PRC have endured a remarkable series of events from the Great Leap Forward to the Cultural Revolution, eventually culminating with reforms offered by Deng Xiaopeng, normalization of political relations with the United States, and its eventual experimentations with Special Economic Zones, leading to the large consumer market that it has become today.

As a result of its economic shift towards a more Capitalist and Consumer based. An article from **China Business Review: The Magazine of the US-China Business Council** entitled, "Understanding Chinese Consumers," written by Yujun Qiu, outlines the consumption patterns of several generations of Chinese civilians.

As it can be expected, Chinese consumers born or growing up in the 1960s to 1970s have lived under tough economic times, and are thus more frugal in their spending habits.

However, Chinese consumers in their thirties account for the most important consumers in the future, as they have grown up in a more open and stable environment than their parents and

grandparents. Compared with older generations, Chinese consumers in their thirties tend to not be as frugal, and spend more on entertainment.

Furthermore, what makes these consumers extremely important with respect to the Hawai'i Tourism Industry is that they are in a position where they will spend on possible trips to the islands for their parents, themselves, and children. This generation is also more likely to spend on quality products and not be as obsessed with finding lower prices as their grandparents' or parents' generation.

Of course, with rapid Westernization being observed in the People's Republic of China – particularly with regard to the popularity of North American cinema and its success in the country – the youngest generation under age 20 account for a future consumer base that has grown up utilizing social media and the internet – and thus much more likely to “expand their horizons” and are also more willing to pay to visit overseas destinations such as Hawai'i.

In terms of ensuring Hawaii's future as a global tourist destination, and by extension the future stability and success of our economy, these are several reasons embedded within Chinese society that point to an upward trend of higher consumerism that will benefit our Tourism industry.

I am also employed at a retail establishment called “Honolulu Firearms and Range,” one of Hawaii's few indoor ranges. For the three years I have been employed there, I have noticed a marked increase in the number of tourists from the People's Republic of China and Taiwan.

Although these visitors are obviously not able to purchase firearm products from our store, they have a general tendency to purchase branded products such as shirts or bags in quantities much higher than other tourist groups, accounting for a very significant chunk of daily sales. In my own estimation, we receive around five groups of tourists from China every week, of varying sizes.

Furthermore, the presence of former Chinese citizens in Hawaii accounts for an increased level of contact between Hawaii and the PRC, with Chinese individuals in Hawaii often arranging for tours or visits to our place of business. On one occasion, we received multiple groups of twenty tourists within a single day, accounting for a very positive experience for our business.

As I am aware our place of business is a rather “niche” one, I can enthusiastically say that despite the aforementioned, the fact of the matter is we have seen a large surge in tourists from China. If our small business has been so positively affected, I believe that large-scale tourist destinations such as Kualoa Ranch, Pearl Harbor Memorial, Waikiki, Ala Moana and other will be even more positively affected with the introduced bill's encouragement of accommodating more Chinese tourists, particularly if it encourages business staff to be familiar with Chinese culture and **especially** if it encourages the hiring of employees familiar with the Chinese language. The aforementioned recommendations will also obviously have a positive effect on employment of such individuals.

That being said, I am sure that the previous points have been reflected by the committees and its representatives, and I am happy to have shared my personal testimony in support of this bill. Once again, I would like to thank the aforementioned representatives of both committees for their time in hearing my position **in support of HR 29 & HCR 59.**